(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government has formulated any strategy for exploration of these deposits in near future;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The regional exploration carried out by Geological Survey of India (GSI) in Vidharba Region, has established 566 million tonnes of coal in Bhatali, Rajura-Manikgarh, Bahmini-Palasgaon and Jogapur-Sirsi area of Wardha Valley, Chandrapur District, Maharashtra.

(c) to (e) During the Tenth Plan the Sub Group-ll of the Working Group on Coal and Lignite has worked out a programme for regional, promotional and detailed exploration in coalfields of Maharashtra. The programme envisages exploratory drilling of 60,000 meter for regional exploration and 1,01,800 meter of drilling for detailed exploration. Reserves of about 1248 million tonnes of coal in the proved category are likely to be established.

Acceleration of reforms in mining sector

†2242. SHRI BALKAVI BAIRAGI: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) steps Government are going to take to accelerate the reform process in the mining sector;

(b) whether the Government have incorporated aspects like scientific methods related to the mining sector, protection of the environment and implementing the programmes related to education, creation of jobs, health and environmental reforms for the people living in the adjoining areas of mines, on priority in the said programmes of reform-process; and

(c) if so, the details therefor?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) to (c) Implementation of reform process in the mining sector is a continuous process. The National Mineral Policy (NMP) was announced in 1993 and the mining sector was thrown open for private investment including foreign investment. To give effect to the NMP and to take the reforms process forward extensive changes were made in the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 (MMDR Act) in 1994 and 1999 and Rules framed thereunder were accordingly amended.

The reform process encompassed *inter alia* opening up of the mining sector to private investment including foreign investment, delegation of powers to the State Governments, simplification of procedures, ushering in an investor-friendly climate comparable with best global practices and ensuring systematic and scientific mining.

Under the provision of Section 18 of the MMDR Act, 1957 Central Government have notified Mineral Conservation and Development Rules, 1988 for conservation and systematic development of minerals and protection of environment. Appropriate penalties have been provided for contravention of these Rules.

Interaction meetings with State Governments, Central Ministries/ Departments and the Investors in the mining sector are held from time to time to make the policy and procedure of grant of mineral concessions investor friendly and to sensitise the various stake holders about the reform process. Last three such meetings, a Tripartite meeting of Central Government, State Governments and Investors, 27th meeting of the Mineral Advisory Council and Conference of State Ministers of Mining and Geology have been held on 12.11.2001, 21.9.2002 and 22.1.2003 respectively.

In the process of ongoing consultation with the Stake-holders, it has been decided in the Conference of State Ministers of Mining and Geology held on 22.1.2003 that for giving thrust to the mining sector reforms *inter-alia* for scientific methods related to mining protection of environment etc., the rules framed under the MMDR Act, 1957 shall incorporate provisions relating to minimum size of mining lease, and detailed provisions regarding mine closure plans and rehabilitation of mined out areas.